

**LIMITED DISCLOSURE BILL PASSES
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE**

Legislation to provide an exception to an attorney's duty of confidentiality when the attorney reasonably believes the disclosure is necessary to prevent a criminal act likely to result in the death of, or substantial bodily harm to, an individual, was approved unanimously by the [Assembly Judiciary Committee](#) at its Tuesday (April 22) hearing.

The bill, [AB 1101](#) by Assm. [Darrell Steinberg](#) (D-Sacramento), would bring California into conformity with 37 other states that permit – but specifically do not require – attorneys to disclose such information. Eleven other states require attorneys to make such disclosures.

The bill would accomplish what the State Bar has been unable to do three times via rule since 1987. The Supreme Court denied the first attempt because the rule would have been in conflict with the statute relating to attorney-client privilege (which subsequently was amended in 1992 to specify that such information is not privileged), and the second two without comment. The bill now goes to the Assembly floor.

**COUNTY LAW LIBRARIES
FUNDING TASK FORCE**

The [Assembly Judiciary Committee](#) on Tuesday approved a measure that would require the Judicial Council to establish a task force on county law libraries. The measure, [AB 1095](#) by Assembly Judiciary Committee chair [Ellen Corbett](#), would charge the task force with identifying the needs related to county law library operations and facilities. The task force would make recommendations to the Judicial Council and the Legislature for funding county law library operations, facility improvements and expansion.

The task force would be comprised of nine individuals: three from the judicial branch, three county law library administrators, and three representatives of counties. Task force members from the judicial branch, county law library administrators and the counties would be appointed by the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Council of California County Law Librarians and the California State Association of Counties, respectively.

Under the bill's provisions, the task force would be appointed on or before March 1, 2004. A report and recommendations would be due to the Judicial Council and the Legislature on or before January 1, 2005.

**COURT BOND ACT BILL CLEARS
SENATE JUDICIARY**

The [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) gave 4-0 approval Tuesday to Judicial Council-sponsored legislation ([SB 655](#)) to place a \$4.146 billion bond measure on the 2004 ballot to provide funding for court renovation and construction.

The bill by Judiciary Committee Chair [Martha Escutia](#) (D-Whittier) is the final piece in the program to restructure the funding of operations of the state's trial courts which began with the Lockyer-Isenberg Trial Court Funding Act of 1997 ([AB 233](#), Escutia and Pringle) and culminated with last year's Trial Court Facilities Act (TCFA) of 2002 ([SB 1732](#) – Escutia). The measure is supported by the California State Assn. of Counties and the State Bar Board of Governors. SB 655 now goes to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMITTEE
SPONSORS STATE BAR MEASURE**

The [Joint Legislative Audit Committee](#) (JLAC) Wednesday gutted and amended a previously unrelated bill to propose extending the statutory requirement of a performance audit for the State Bar by the [Bureau of State Audits](#) (BSA) from once every two years to once every four years. The amendments came as a complete surprise to State Bar officials.

The amendments to [AB 193](#) by Assembly Member [Rebecca Cohn](#) (D-Saratoga), Chair of the JLAC, reportedly were made at the request of the BSA, which the committee oversees. The appearance of the bill coincided with the BSA's release Thursday of its most recent statutory audit of the State Bar, [2002-03](#), which, except for minor complaints about a need to more strictly enforce disciplinary policies and procedures, gave the Bar an extremely positive review.

The audit was the second highly positive appraisal of the State Bar by the BSA since the statutory audit requirement was enacted in 1999 as part of the legislation ([SB 144](#) – Schiff) that restored the State Bar after its near-shutdown following the 1997 veto of its funding authorization bill.